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## National Intelligence Daily

Friday 16 December 1983

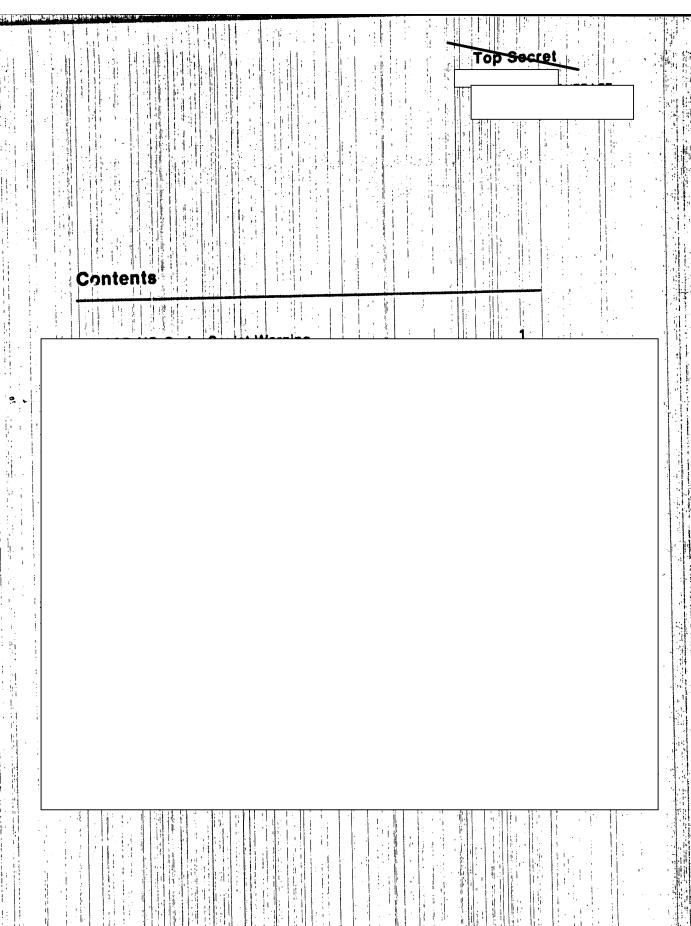
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APPROVED FOR BELEASE DATE: IUL 2002

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The FMLN has been following a strategy of military and economic attrition designed to cause the collapse of the armed forces and the government. The guerrillas probably view the national election scheduled for March as a major test of their forces, and we expect a campaign of increased urban attacks and terrorism. In addition, there are indications the guerrillas may attempt to seize and declare a liberated zone in northern or eastern El Salvador.

Cuba and probably Nicaragua are likely to provide adequate supplies for an election offensive. The US force presence in the region, Salvadoran and Honduran interdiction efforts, and anti-Sandinista activity in Nicaragua have slowed, but not stopped, outside support to the FMLN. Logistic support, particularly from Nicaragua, may diminish in response to US pressure, but it probably will be adequate to sustain the guerrillas at least for a reduced level of operations. FMLN headquarters may move to El Salvador from Nicaragua, particularly if the guerrillas declare a liberated zone. It probably would be able to function within El Salvador at least through late 1984.

The insurgents will not be able to achieve victory without increased popular support, but, if they should get adequate logistic support, they are likely to pose a greater threat to US military and political objectives in El Salvador, especially the March election. The military will have to act aggressively to prevent the insurgents from seizing the initiative at the time of the election. If the guerrillas were to be successful in undermining the March election, their near-term prospects would significantly improve. Over the next year, the FMLN will be in a stronger position to exploit discontent if extreme right terrorism continues and efforts to roll back the reform process succeed.

US training and support have allowed the armed forces to grow and improve and have been a major factor in the military's present ability to prevent an insurgent victory. Four quick-reaction battalions and several special operations units have been organized, trained, and effectively used against the insurgents. The number of available junior officers has been increased significantly, and improvements have been made in the armed forces' technical skills. The armed forces can continue to expand, but the government's ability and resolve to mobilize fully against the insurgency will be seriously constrained by the military's shortcomings and by resistance from the country's military and economic elites.

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The armed forces' mobility and logistic support, though
increased, have not kept pace with operational and force
requirements, and more ground and air transport is needed. More
requirements, and more ground and all transport is resident and
training for departmental and security forces is also needed, and
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assistance also has inhibited the armed forces' conduct of the war.
assistance disc true illustration
The quality of the officer corps is relatively high, but attitudinal
The quality of the officer corps is relatively man if the querrillas
problems within the corps will have to be overcome if the guerrillas
political—has impaired the ability of the officer corps to pursue the
war effort optimally.
Most of the officer corps, while not opposed to reforms, distrusts
the Christian Democratic Party and is susceptible to rightist political
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machinations that undercut its leadership and divert attention from
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the management the hand of rightist officers and will internately
impact on national politics before and after the election in March.
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there is likelihood of an armed forces
Despite such problems, there is little likelihood of an armed forces
collapse in the near term. The officer corps is determined to defeat
the guerrillas, and the enlisted ranks will fight well when properly
supplied and led.
in the near term, the military is more likely to be successful if it
moves to preempt rather than to react to guerrilla strategy. Reversing
moves to preempt rather than to react to good the challenge.
recent insurgent gains will be the military's most immediate challenge.
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war afford it the officers decome bioccupios time
maniform molitical managivars, the digetimas trigit be do to to both a
major military and psychological victory at election time.
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The armed forces will be susceptible to US influence, but
The armed forces will be susceptible to be mixed. The
performance on human rights issues will continue to be mixed. The
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be deeply stung by any public US criticism of its war effort.

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Current levels of US assistance are adequate to enable the Salvadoran military to prevent an insurgent victory in the near term. However, the armed forces will require increased and sustained aid to overcome the present stalemate and eventually to defeat the guerrillas. Given the 4-to-1 military-to-guerrilla ratio—which is well below what historically has been required to defeat an insurgency—the Salvadoran armed forces' manpower and firepower will not be able to expand rapidly enough to gain a decisive advantage in the near term. However, US assistance that enhanced the military's mobility and communications would increase the tactical prospects of the existing forces until these forces could be expanded over the longer term.

Nevertheless, US military assistance alone will not solve all the armed forces' problems. Without improvements in Salvadoran military capabilities, some resolution of attitudinal problems in the officer corps, preservation of economic and political reforms, and neutralization of extreme right influences, the country's prospects for winning the war will be poor over the long term.

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